

Dec. 22, '81.

1.

Dear Pinna,

Thank you so much for the photos taken in India, they certainly brought back good memories of the discussions we had there. Don't worry if you were not as organized as you wish the past two years. If there can be just a little more of sati now and then, of what appears just through the senses, it is already helpful. What we call a table, a tree or a house are just different compositions or groups of rūpa. In each unit of rūpa there is solidity, temperature, motion, colour, taste, nutrition, odour. The only thing that is visible is visible object or colour, and this arises together with the other rūpas. We find what is visible so important. It is only this one kind of rūpa which is visible object. When we see a tree, a table a person. What is visible is only visible object, one kind of rūpa arising together with the other rūpas. When there is touching, it is not visible object which is touched, but the rūpa which is tangible object, appearing as hardness or softness. It arises together with the rūpa which is visible object, but only tangible object is touched. Then the rūpa which is colour appears, it means there is a nama which experiences what is visible. That nama, feeling, is different from the rūpa which is colour. Now often we have called all these things from Khun Sujin, but if we consider more details from the Abhidhamma, it makes a little more sense to us that rūpa is so different from nama.

I want to tell you about our stop over in Bangkok on our way to Nepal, which turned out so different from what we had planned. Sarah and Jonathan had planned their stay so that they still could meet us, and we met in a restaurant, Allan came also. While sitting there I could hardly talk because I suddenly developed an excruciating earache. We had planned a little session to combine with Dhamma talk but I was rushed to the hospital. There they told me to visit a specialist later in the morning. In the meantime Lodewijk and I went to Khun Sujin's house. I order to have tea until it was time for the doctor. Khun Sujin said: Can there be sati, even in pain? I said, yes, but not much. It does not matter, even if it is a little. I asked Khun Sujin what she planned to talk about in the temple and she said: anantara paccaya, that is the condition which is contiguity or immediacy. There are many different types of conditions which work on the nama and rupa which arise. For example, kamma which produces vipaka is one type of condition, the object which is experienced is another type of condition. Now, the fact that each citta (moment of consciousness) which arises has to be followed by a next one is the anantara paccaya or contiguity

condition. We can check this now. Is there no seeing? It does not stay but it is succeeded by a next citta. There are objects experienced through eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind-door time and again. There is no moment without citta. It starts from birth. We take it so for granted that there is citta all the time, but it is due to anantara paccaya that the series of cittas goes on and on. At the moment of birth all the different inclinations and also the different kammās which have the potential to produce vipakā, pleasant or unpleasant results, are accumulated in the citta. We can call it individuality or personality, the word itself is not wrong, but we cling to that idea and take it for self. It is true that your accumulations are different from mine, but actually it is confusing to speak about individualities, because there are only nama and rupa which arise because of conditions and do not stay.

When there is excruciating pain it can be the result of kamma of many lives ago. Because of ~~ana~~ contiguity condition each citta is followed by the next one. There are impressions through the sense-doors and cittas which experience objects through the mind-door, there are pleasant objects and unpleasant objects which are experienced, there are kusala cittas and akusala cittas. We cannot stop the series of cittas which arise and fall away.

Even if one finds life unbearable and one would like to make an end to it, it is not possible, there is always the next citta which will follow the last citta of this life, that is the first citta of the next life. Besides, the citta with violence which motivates a deed can bring an unpleasant result in the next life. One does not solve one's problems in that way. It is more helpful to see all that happens, also one's unpleasant experiences as only conditioned phenomena which have nothing to do with a self. There may be unpleasant feeling, but feeling is only feeling, it arises because of conditions. There is not 'my feeling'. Things which happen in life have to happen, they are conditioned already. If there can be a little more understanding one can change one's attitude towards it. Then one will see that it matters less what the object is what is experienced, but what matters are the kusala cittas or akusala cittas. I quote from the sutta Nipāta, the Arrow, (from vs 574-593):

As the fire in a burning house is extinguished with water, so a wise, discriminating, learned and sensible man should quickly drive away the sorrow that arises, as the wind (blows off) a piece of cotton. He who seeks happiness should withdraw the arrow: his own lamentations, longings and grief. With the arrow withdrawn, unattached, he would attain to peace of mind; and when all sorrow has been transcended he is sorrow-free and has realised nibbāna. Only the last citta of the arahat is not succeeded by a next citta.

To go on with my story, the painkiller I had been given did not work so quickly, but I felt so much better after a little Dhamma talk, and in a very relaxed atmosphere ~~Khun~~ with Khun S., Jin and her father, we took tea and fruits. Dhamma is really the best medicine, also for the body. We went to the ear-specialist who blew out our ears and the next day we could go on our trek in Nepal as planned. Sarah and Jonathan were going to have a Dhamma lunch in Khun Anan's house the next day, and I also hope to hear about that from Sarah ~~herself~~ herself. We walked for 21 days, seven hours a day, it was very good but very, very cold. We slept in a tent and I read suttas in the tent to Lodewijk. Dhamma is everywhere, only nama and rupa everywhere. It was a real change from our life in Jakarta.

While I am still on this letter, I take the opportunity to answer a question I received about nibbana. A part of 'Thus it was said' (vs. 43) is quoted, where nibbana is described as a state, as a tranquil state. What is that ~~tranquil~~ state? Peace stands here for reality. Nibbana is real, it is a dhamma. Nibbana is referred to as sorrow free, as peace, freedom of all grasping. 'To let go of everything' someone said. It is all easily said. One just cannot reach that goal just automatically. We cannot tell ourselves: just let go of everything. This is not realistic. We must be sincere; we are not so far yet. We should know that the pañña, the wisdom which realises nibbana is a wisdom which is highly developed, and we must begin by the beginning: develop the understanding of the realities in and around us, in order to see these as they are: only conditioned, namas and rupas. We cannot skip that step. So what is appearing right now, the colour, the seeing, the sound, the hearing, the feeling, the thoughts, should be known as they are. We must not try to let go of everything. It is a more developed clear understanding which will do its work: first detachment from the idea of self. Only the arahat has pañña developed to the degree that there is no more grasping to anything, he has drawn out the arrow. The final goal is the eradication of all defilements, but it is all to be done step by step.

The other question: what does the Buddha mean when he speaks about the perfect one, does he refer to himself? Perfect is the one without any defilements, that is the Buddha and the arahats. with mettā, Nina.